

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (10-6-1979 Strandtown Baptist Church)

Hebrews 13:19-24
Additional Reading: Psalms 145

Introduction

We reach the conclusion of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The glorious theme of the covenant is brought to us again, as well as serious teaching about Christian loyalty and obedience. The Christian life was described in the last few chapters – now the writer tells us how it can be done.

What God is able to do

This is one of the most important statements about what God can do for us. Augustine said, “Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt.” God’s demands are always matched by God’s grace. God is able to **make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight** (Hebrews 13:21). N.B. the emphasis is not on what we do, or what God expects us to do, but on what He can do in us. *καταρτισσαι* is the same root word as used for James and John “mending” their nets in Matthew 4:21, and for “restore” in Galatians 6:1, “fitted” in Romans 9:22, and “prepare” in Hebrews 10:5. It is also used to mean setting a broken limb. Therefore this word suggests being made fit, mended, prepared, equipped, furnished, made to be what we ought to be, put in order, restored, filled up with what is lacking.

“In every good work” – we are to be all-rounders. So often we major on some points and totally lack in other areas. God is able to correct what is wrong and defective in our characters. Therefore a passionate man can become meek, a hesitating man can become bold. If we are in danger of being lop-sided, His work is to repair defects and even up the lack of balance. He is able to make us strongest at our weakest point. He can make us balanced, symmetrical, equal all round.

How does He do it? He works in us that which is well pleasing in His sight through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the possibility of the impossible when God is taken into consideration. Christ has done one great work – on the Cross – and now He is doing another work. He indwells us by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is with us and in us, at work moulding, shaping, developing, so that we are fitted, restored, made good all-rounders.

But note He does not work by magic. Faith and obedience and willingness are required of us. God works in and dwells in us, but we have to yield ourselves to His working. Two sides of sanctification – **Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you** (Philippians 2:12-13). God works *in* that we may work *out*.

Proof that God is at work, and that He is not being hampered by us, is that we are doing His will. Bring lives to this test – are we doing His will in daily life and in the little things? If so, this is proof that God is at work.

Is God at work in us? Do we expect Him to be so? Do we believe He can be at work? Do we desire Him to be at work? Are we thrilled and excited by the possibility? Lets expect, desire and pray for this.

The world would say we should cultivate our own nature, correct our faults, do our best. But Christ says, open the door, let me get to work, I am able to impart new life and spirit. Open hearts to Him, seek for Him to enter in and restore, furnish, make and mend.

Guarantees that God can and will do this

How can we be sure? Is all this really possible? A great building needs a deep foundation, a leaping fountain needs a great spring, large prayer needs strong foundation. Three guarantees which are bound up with the kind of God we worship.

- (a) The name of God. He is **The God of peace** (Hebrews 13:20). This name is like a benediction into our restless lives. This beautiful title should be savoured. In the most stressful situation, He can bring peace into men's souls. When man's heart and mind are distracted, and when torn in two, as he gives his life into the control of God, he begins to enjoy peace. God makes us at peace with ourselves, with others and with Him. Carries us away into lofty regions above circumstances and agitations of earthly life. The "God of Peace" is used several times in the New Testament, and always connected with our holiness. He brings His own peace into our souls, He brings order where there is chaos. Our inner life is no longer torn by contending passion. When we are at peace, then we are in the frame of mind to be fitted and furnished by Him. Able to receive grace to be the kind of people we ought to be.
- (b) The power of God. **He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.** (This is Hebrews only reference to the resurrection, Hebrews stresses the exaltation). The resurrection of Jesus brings possibilities in life to those who trust Him. Amazing display of power. That power is available for us. His resurrection is the measure of the power that can be at work in us. That power and the risen life of the Lord Jesus can be imparted to His people. It is available to us. "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." wrote William Carey. Believe that Christ will work in us, and make us complete in Him. Through the resurrection, God not only shows us His will, but equips us to do it. He gives us the task, and also the energy to do it. When God sends us out, He sends us out armed and equipped with all we need.
- (c) Promise of God. **Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.** This new relationship between God and man through Christ. God has put Himself under new obligation – to forgive, that we might know Him etc. He puts His laws into our minds and writes them on our hearts. He is no longer *out there*, but *in here*. By the covenant, God is obliged to take poor soul that trusts Him, and fulfil that promise. The covenant has been sealed by blood. No further guarantee is required. No firmer guarantee could be given.

Therefore God will perfect us in every good work, and work in us. Need to look outward and upward in considering the possibilities for our lives. No use looking at selves. Instead, look to the God of peace who is able to bring harmony into disordered life, the God of power who raised again Jesus from the dead, and the God of promise who, in His covenant, has guaranteed and pledged Himself that He will perfect and work in us.

Concluding Ascription of Praise

Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever (Hebrews 13:21). Reached the climax of the letter. Rest of chapter is final words of greeting. To all intents and purposes, he has reached conclusion.

The glorious themes of this section - God of peace, resurrection of Jesus, Shepherd of the sheep, his blood, everlasting covenant, power in lives of believers – is there any other way to end? All His works tend to His glory. “Glory to God in the highest” was the theme at His birth. Equally, in every aspect of His works. Exclusive glory, because salvation is of the Lord. Men are relegated to being debtors and receivers. Christ has done it all. Endless glory.

One year after his conversion on May 21st 1738, Charles Wesley wrote the hymn “O for a thousand tongues to sing”, which he headed “For the anniversary day of one’s conversion”. It has been the first hymn in the Methodist Hymn Book ever since 1780. It was inspired by Peter Bohler’s statement, “Had I 1000 tongues, I would praise Him with them all”.

His glory is our concern now. And then around the throne His glory will be our theme. Begins here and continued hereafter. **Blessing and honour, glory and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever** (Revelation 5:13). Words of Joseph Addison,

*“Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I’ll raise
But eternity’s too short
To utter all thy praise.”*